

[Previous](#)[Next](#)[All News Feeds](#)

CHANGING THE GAME FOR THE STUDENTS OF UNIONVILLE-CHADDS FORD

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District Launches Community Book Read Ahead of Author's Visit

The Unionville-Chadds Ford School District is encouraging the community to participate in a summer book read. *Changing the Game: The Parents Guide to Raising Happy, High-Performing Athletes and Giving Youth Sports Back to Our Kids* is a national bestselling book by John O'Sullivan. In *Changing the Game*, O'Sullivan draws upon three decades of high-level playing and coaching experience to take readers behind the scenes of competitive youth sports and demonstrates how they have changed from being a fun pastime to an ultra-competitive enterprise. He then teaches parents that the secret to raising happy, high performing children begins by helping them attain a positive mindset and an enjoyable youth sports environment. O'Sullivan believes that by following seven actionable principles of high performance outlined in the book, parents can give their children a competitive edge, while at the same time making youth sports a positive experience for their family and their community.

Forty million American children play youth sports, but 70 percent drop out by age 13. "That's three out of four kids," John O' Sullivan said. "It's simply not fun anymore."

"When I first started as the Supervisor of Athletics at Unionville, a parent gave me a copy of *Changing the Game*," stated Pat Crater, Supervisor of Athletics for Unionville-Chadds Ford School District. "We had a great conversation about our perspectives on sports. Sure, competing to win is part of interscholastic sports, but our program is so much more. And this book reminds us of what is truly important in a young athlete's experience."

In his book, O'Sullivan asserts that parents and coaches criticize performance and put too much pressure on their kids to be better, to win games, and to land sports scholarships. Only 2 percent of high school athletes win scholarships (of these, the average is less than \$11,000). "This is the race to nowhere," O'Sullivan added.

The book made its way around the district and it soon became clear that the message would be meaningful to a wider audience. While the book is written to parents of young athletes, the key takeaways from *Changing the Game* can apply to many aspects of a child's life.

"It's about celebrating our kids and letting them flourish while empowering them to pursue their passions, whatever those may be," stated Dr. Leah Reider, Director of Pupil Services for Unionville-Chadds Ford School District.

As part of the district's wellness efforts, the district looks for opportunities that focus on the whole child and that can have a meaningful impact on the overall student experience. During the June school board meeting, school board directors supported the selection of *Changing the Game* as a recommended community book read and approved John O'Sullivan's speaking engagement scheduled for the fall.

"We have done community book reads in the past," Reider said. "The message in *Changing the Game* directly connects to many of our wellness standards. The book is geared for parents, but we want everyone to read it—coaches, teachers, school board members, the community" she said, adding the book is not solely about sports.

"I think that this is a very important read, not only for our coaches, who are all reading it, but for the athletes' parents, and really for any parent and any adult who works with kids. Our marching band director is reading it," Crater added.

The author of the book, John O'Sullivan, will be coming to speak to the community on September 23 at 7:00 p.m. in the Unionville High School auditorium. The district is encouraging the UCF community to read *Changing the Game* before O'Sullivan's special visit. The event is open to the public and neighboring school districts and communities are welcomed to attend.

Copies of *Changing the Game* are available to sign out from lending libraries located in the main office at each UCF school building. The book is also available for purchase on Amazon.

"We do the best job of educating our students at UCFSD," stated Crater. "We spare no expense in professional development for our teachers and administrators. This is our opportunity to invest in the experience that our kids get after 2:43 p.m.; whatever they may be involved in."

For more information about *Changing the Game*, visit: <https://www.ucfsd.org/wellness/changing-the-game>